

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Lighting the Second Advent Candle

** Hymn – 2

Opening Prayer

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OUR HUMANNESSE AND GOD'S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, I look to you for help in coping with my daily life. When my day is difficult I look to you to make my day easier. By looking in this way I overlook things that it would be helpful to notice, like why my day is difficult, and what about me makes difficult days come in runs that last a while. I tend to think in terms of relief, especially immediate relief. You involve yourself in my life looking for something else: the larger issues of "origins" and "causes." To this end you often bring to my mind the awareness of things about me that cause me dis-ease and distress. I notice how urgently I wish to be distracted from such discomfort, and how easily I am distracted. I have always believed you want me to pay attention to what distresses me, and I notice how I chastise myself for being distracted. I have begun to notice that you do not chastise me for being distracted. I wonder if you are asking me to notice that I am distracted. I wonder if you want me to pay attention to being distracted and what distracts me? I also wonder: of what value is such information?

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Mark 1:1-8

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – 3

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ all creatures here below;
Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;
One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 14

Charge and Benediction

** People who have arrived late are seated.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TODAY	10:00	Worship
	11:00	Coffee and Fellowship
	11:30	Conversation
	12:00	Lunch Bunch
MONDAY	1:00	Centering Prayer, at church

Lectionary Readings for December 14, 2014
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 16-8, 19-28

FYI

Materials related to the 2014 Presbyterian Giving Catalog are on the table in the coffee room.

Also on that table is a sign-up sheet for treats for the Sundays in Advent and Christmas. The suggestion is to bring foods that have some meaning for us, for example “family favorites,” “traditional foods” and “favorite party foods.” The sign-up has two lines per Sunday so it is possible to “buddy up.”

Information about the financial support of our congregation may be found on the table as well.

There are two articles for your information: “The Context of Advent and Christmas,” and “The First Cycle of the Church Year.” Both are in the coffee room.

The Usher in the Narthex: Jim Plein.

The Usher in the Sanctuary: Richard Egan.

Faith Presbyterian Church, 190 Arlen Dr., Rohnert Park CA 94928
Church Office: 707-795-6620

Our web site is <www.faithpresbyterianrp.org>

Elders: Joan Schmutz, Marolyn Bode, Jim Plein.

Deacons: Jenny Goldgur, Richard Egan, Mary Jane Beccaria.

Clerk of Session: Marolyn Bode.

[H] 585-8350

Pastor: Jim Robie

[C] 291-8489

We are a community that gathers in an attitude of reverence directed toward God.

Reverence is a feeling of deep respect and devotion, of profound awe, of admiration and esteem and honor, of gratitude.

This feeling arises from the knowing that it is not possible to be separate from the welcoming and embracing presence of God, who is with us in anything and everything that life brings us, always accepting how we feel and what we think, always working to help us inhabit what is true for us, and to fashion the most fully human response possible for us in response to what our life contains.

If you are able to enter this worship experience in a reverential manner, you are encouraged to immerse yourself in the experience.

If you are not able to do so, you are encouraged to consider that being truthful to your experience is a way of showing reverence to God who invites you to explore the value of the way you feel in your life and about your life. You are also invited to ponder with us our conceptions about God, looking for more adequate ways to understand God and how God personally companions and supports us in all things.

Welcome!

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT [Mark 1:1-8]

In both Matthew and Luke the birth of Christ is given a purpose: he is born to save us from our sins. If we translate this into the thought-world we live in we would say: he is born to keep us from being worn out by the constant effort we make to be someone we are not; or said inversely, he is born to keep us from being worn out by the constant effort we make to not be the person we are. The people who raised us modeled for us the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that would be appropriate for us, as well as those that would not. As we grow up we comply with and/or rebel against what they modeled, and as a result end up disconnected from various facets of the life that is actually ours in the moment. A great deal of our time and energy is spent complying and/or rebelling, and over time this effort wears us out. Christians believe that the mercy of God is seen in God's intervention in this dilemma: the aspect of God we call Christ incarnates in each of us and works to recover with us the relationships with our own lives that have not formed.

Last week's text was concerned with how this recovery begins. Insights come which make us aware of what we are thinking, feeling, saying and/or doing. Mostly these insights are informative and we are able to make use of them. However, occasionally what catches our attention is upsetting or even disturbing because it does not meet the standards of what was modeled for us. We get glimpses informing us that we are not what we are supposed to be and believe we are. These insights pull the heart out of the normal way we understand ourselves by introducing us to aspects of our life we have not been encouraged to relate to. These upsetting or disturbing insights are the ones we are advised to notice because they will lead to a change in the way we experience and understand ourselves. The advice is to be awake and pay attention to these occurrences, even though the experience of them is usually difficult.

The word "wilderness" might be a good description of the experience of these insights. Into this wilderness an "urgency" appears: an urgency to mitigate the impact of the insight that has disturbed us. In today's text verse four says: "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." "John the Baptist/baptizer" would be the name in mythology for what we would describe as an internal urging or urgency. The urging is to immerse ourselves in the effort to get relief, and to seek that relief by exercising our minds. We make the effort to think differently about how to approach the insight that has come to us. The word translated here

as "repentance" is a Greek word meaning "compunction" ["a strong uneasiness caused by a sense of guilt"] and the Greek word implies using our minds to find relief from the uneasiness we feel over not being what was modeled for us. The goal is "forgiveness of sins;" that is, "freedom" from the uneasiness of missing the mark of what was modeled for us. The response to this urging is usually some effort to be distracted from the uneasiness as the way to overcome it and return to what is familiar. So we might think of the urging that John the Baptist symbolizes as the urging to be distracted. It is important to keep what John symbolizes in perspective. Unless this urge to seek relief forms and operates in us we are in danger of being caught in what distresses us, imploding over it or exploding at it. John's way is different: move around it. Since most of us already live with this urging being operational we are not likely to grasp its importance.

In our culture we generally treat distractions as things to be avoided so that we may pay more attention to what is troubling us. I believe the advice here is to pay attention to how we are distracted, to actually think about how we are distracted, as the way to approach differently what makes us uneasy. To be more direct, rather than do a frontal assault on what makes us uneasy, we are encouraged to pay attention to the way we are distracted as a way to understand our uneasiness. Implied in this is the idea that distractions are not problems to be resolved or things to be shunned, but are a step on the way to an as yet unknown solution to an issue we face. More is needed than being distracted and paying attention to those distractions. However, this is only the second week in Advent so more is coming.

It is important to have the awareness that we are not the person that was modelled for us, and to be impacted by that awareness. It is also important that we respond to the urging to overcome that awareness and get relief. As we respond to this urging we will find ourselves immersed in the distractions that bring us relief. We will find it is much easier to pay attention to our distractions than it is to attempt to penetrate directly what distresses us. That is, the material is more available. This effort will help us acknowledge the truth of not meeting what was modeled for us. We will also learn that we are unable to eradicate that awareness, and that to get relief from the uneasiness something is needed which we cannot supply.

[Jim Robie, 12-4-14, Cycle B, Mark 1:1-8]